

Preventing Osteoporosis

Building strong bones during one's lifetime can be the best defense against developing osteoporosis later in life. Five steps to bone health and osteoporosis prevention include:

1. Getting your daily recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D
2. Engage in regular weight-bearing exercise
3. Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol
4. Talk to your healthcare provider about bone health
5. Have a bone density test and take medication when appropriate

Calcium Getting enough calcium throughout your life helps to build and keep strong bones. Calcium is a mineral needed by the body for healthy bones, teeth, and proper function of the heart, muscles, and nerves. The body cannot produce calcium; therefore, it must be absorbed through food. Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products – low fat or nonfat milk, cheese, and yogurt
- Dark green leafy vegetables – bok choy and broccoli
- Calcium fortified foods – orange juice, cereal, bread, soy beverages, and tofu products
- Nuts - almonds

| Recommended Calcium Intakes per day are: | |
|--|---------------|
| Ages | Amount mg/day |
| Birth to 6 months | 210 |
| 6 months to 1 year | 270 |
| 1-3 | 500 |
| 4-8 | 800 |
| 9-13 | 1300 |
| 14-18 | 1300 |
| 19-30 | 1000 |
| 31-50 | 1000 |
| 51-70 | 1200 |
| 70 or older | 1200 |
| Pregnant and Lactating | 1000 |

If you think you aren't getting enough calcium in your diet, check with your doctor. He or she may recommend that you try a calcium supplement; calcium carbonate and calcium citrate are two common forms. Too much calcium can cause problems for some people. On most days you should not get more than 2500 mg of total calcium. That includes calcium from all sources – foods, drinks, and supplements.

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Vitamin D Vitamin D also plays an important role in healthy bone development. Vitamin D helps in the absorption of calcium. Most people's bodies are able to make enough vitamin D if they are out in the sun for at least 20 minutes every day. You can also get vitamin D from eggs, fatty fish, and cereal and milk fortified with vitamin D. If you think you are not getting enough vitamin D, check with your doctor. Each day you should have:

400 IU (international unit) if you are age 51 to 70

600 IU if you are over age 70

As with calcium, be careful. More than 2000 IU of vitamin D each day may cause unwanted side effects.

Repeated physical activity Regular life-long exercise can also reduce the likelihood of bone fractures and weight-bearing exercise helps reduce bone mineral loss. Some examples of bone strengthening exercises include:

- Walking, jogging, or running
- Tennis or racquetball
- Field hockey
- Stair climbing
- Jumping rope
- Basketball
- Dancing
- Hiking
- Soccer
- Weight lifting

Adults should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Children should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week

Tobacco and alcohol Recent studies have shown a direct relationship between tobacco use and decreased bone density. In many cases smokers are thinner than nonsmokers, tend to drink more alcohol, may be less active, and have poor diets. Women who smoke also tend to have an earlier menopause than nonsmokers. These factors place many smokers at an increased risk for osteoporosis.

Chronic alcohol use has been linked to an increase in fractures of the hip, spine, and wrist. Drinking too much alcohol interferes with the balance of calcium in the body. It also affects the production of hormones, which have a protective effect on bone; and of vitamins, which we need to absorb calcium. Excessive alcohol consumption can also lead to more falls and related fractures.